



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Transit
Administration**

The Deputy Administrator

400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

The Honorable Mufi Hannemann
Mayor of Honolulu
Honolulu Hale
530 S. King St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: Alternatives Analysis Initiation Guidance

Dear Mayor Hanneman:

As a follow-up to your recent meeting with Secretary Mineta, I am writing to address the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) concerns about your proposed major capital investment project on Oahu. FTA understands that the City and County of Honolulu is planning to initiate a study of transportation alternatives for the Kapolei/Downtown Corridor. We also understand that you are considering the construction of a local segment prior to the completion of necessary federal approvals for entire project. We strongly caution you with regard to this approach and note our recent experience with the Oahu Bus Rapid Transit Project.

FTA is very interested in tracking your progress toward potential New Starts funding for a transit fixed guideway alternative proposal. Your timely and satisfactory progress will be based, in large measure, on the quality of the technical work performed throughout the New Starts process.

As the City and County of Honolulu begins its Alternatives Analysis (AA), FTA reminds you of the critical importance of AA in project development and the technical assistance FTA can provide. AA enables local decision-makers to compare benefits and costs of a full range of investment strategies to meet locally identified transportation needs. FTA technical assistance is available to provide support of your efforts. We have found that early FTA involvement in the project's development helps avoid problems that would occur later when resolution is much more difficult or expensive. Additionally, FTA's early assistance helps project sponsors prepare the information FTA requires to advance a locally preferred alternative into Preliminary Engineering. This, in turn, helps shorten the approval process. Also, FTA's major investment planning and project development website provides information which is useful for preparing AA's and it can be found at:

http://www.fta.dot.gov/grant_programs/transportation_planning/9924_ENG_HTML.htm

FTA requests project sponsors submit three statements. They comprise an AA *start-up* that documents the sponsor's project planning systematically. The start-up information is necessary for FTA to evaluate the AA, NOI, and Purpose and Need Statement. The start-up information itemizes the transportation alternatives that FTA requires for the approval of the Baseline Alternative. The three statements are:

- (1) Transportation problems and needs in the study area;
- (2) Conceptual alternatives to be evaluated in the study; and,
- (3) Preliminary measures for the evaluation of alternatives.

I encourage you to submit this start-up information to FTA as early as possible. FTA's review will facilitate the development of the Purpose and Need, or Problem Statement. This itemizes the transportation alternatives that FTA later requires for approval of your Baseline Alternative. FTA's review will also facilitate sound travel demand forecasting that yields reliable and valid estimates of transportation benefits for financial planning, capital operations costing, and environmental impacts.

If you have questions, please contact me or Region IX Administrator, Leslie T. Rogers, in San Francisco at (415) 744-3133. FTA looks forward to working with you on your AA.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Jamison